

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ISIAKA ABDULQADIR IMAM
D-8 SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE 20TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS, DHAKA, 27 JULY, 2022.**

Honourable Chair,

Distinguished Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As-Salam Alaikum and Good Morning.

It is indeed an honour for me, Your Excellencies, to address you at the 20th Session of the Council of Ministers meeting here in Dhaka. Before I proceed, May I seize this opportunity to register my profound appreciation to the Honourable Chair and Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr A.K. Abdul Momen, MP.

Our deep appreciation also goes to the Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the excellent arrangements made for the Commission and the Council

of Ministers meetings as well as the sideline events, and also for the warm hospitality they rendered to us since our arrival in Dhaka.

I also would like to commend and appreciate the D-8 Chamber of Commerce and Industry (D-8 CCI) under the leadership Mr. Shiekh Fazle Fahim, the current President of D-8 CCI, for successfully organizing the D-8 Business Forum and Exhibition as well the General Assembly of the D-8 CCI at the sideline of the Council meeting, in commemoration of the silver jubilee of the organization.

Hon. Chair, Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

This meeting marks my maiden participation in the D-8 Council of Ministers since I assumed duty in January this year as the Secretary General of this noble organization. Therefore, it is a great honor and singular privilege to meet you all and I wish to solicit for your

cooperation, support and guidance in discharging my responsibilities.

I wish to register my gratitude to all the Member States for their support and confidence and the trust reposed in me to serve as the Secretary-General of this important economic grouping of developing countries. During my tenure, I look forward to receiving your valuable guidance and wise counsel on advancing the Organization to the next level. I will put in my best in implementing your decisions into actions, in accordance with the Decennial Roadmap (2020-2030), D-8 Charter and other Statutory Documents.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Permit me, Excellencies, to share with you some of my visions for our great organization, during my tenure. I will like to start by emphasizing that partnership with the private sector is on our top

priority which is why several steps have been taken in member states to strengthen the existing bonds. This is in the spirit of trade, social and development of member countries.

I also want to pledge that I will continue to strive hard to implement meaningful projects in member states in order to make the presence of the organization felt in these countries. Visibility of the organization in the member countries, through project implementation, will therefore be on top of my agenda. The cooperation I envisage would also take the forms of collaborations with the development partners, especially the international organizations.

Again, Your Excellencies, exploring new funding mechanisms to finance some projects will be on top of my priorities. Among these projects are those that have been penciled down in recent past such as the proposed D-8 Seed Bank, D-8 Fertilizer Plant and D-8

Shipping Line as the well as the novel D-8 Project Support Fund, which began in 2021.

Honourable Chair

In the present statement, I will present Council with our activities and the achievements recorded since the last 19th Session of Council. Notable among the achievements recorded, is the progress we have made in the area of trade and the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which is the cornerstone of this organization. Today, I am happy to report that the Trade Facilitation Strategy of the PTA was finalized on 16 November, 2021, while negotiation of the protracted Dispute Settlement Mechanism of the PTA was equally successfully concluded on 20 April, 2022.

Both documents, which are central to the smooth implementation of the PTA, are expected to be adopted in the next Session of the D8 Trade Ministers Meeting, which is expected to be hosted during

the Presidency of Bangladesh. All Member States have now set 31st October 2022 as the kick-off date for full operationalization of the PTA. With these positive developments we are now close to the full implementation of D-8 PTA Agreement, as most of the outstanding issues have been resolved.

In recognition of the role of trade in enhancing meaningful economic cooperation, we are taking practical steps to enhance our financial and payment systems. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Council that D8 is in the process of developing some payment products to enable our people achieve financial and economic independence. Such payment products include D-8 Payment Card system, D-8 Clearing House, D-8 qualified Industrial and economic zones, D-8 Creative Economy and Financial Center, D-8 Halal Food Sector Cooperation and D-8 Barter Trading System. These initiatives, which are still being developed, are useful tools to settle our trade balances and reduce the pressure on our foreign exchange reserves and achieve the target economic independence.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, D-8 is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its establishment this year. During this short journey our organization has recorded some modest achievements, especially in the area of establishment of the required Legal Framework and Structures in the key priority areas of cooperation. To mark the silver Jubilee celebration of the Organization, the D-8 Secretariat had recommended and subsequently enjoined member states to organize various activities to commemorate the occasion in their respective countries, including the Secretariat.

In this regard, I would like to inform Your Excellencies that the following events were held, while some are in the pipeline in member states and the Secretariat:

- i. D-8 Investment Forum and a Silver Jubilee Reception, held on 16 June, 2022 in Istanbul, Turkiye.**
- ii. Junior Diplomatic Training programme, held from 19-25 June ,2022 in Ankara, Turkiye.**

- iii. D-8 Business Summit, Expo and Multi-Cultural event, held from 25-27 July, 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.**
- iv. D8 Culture and Food Show, planned in September, 2022 in Istanbul, Turkiye.**
- v. D-8 Forum on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises scheduled in Abuja, Nigeria from 23-24 August 2022.**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the area of External relations, I am pleased to inform Your Excellencies, that the Secretariat has achieved tremendous progress since the 19th Session of Council. We have strengthened existing partnerships with UN Bodies substantially since my assumption of duty. Today, D-8 is now being invited to participate in meetings and activities of the UN and its Specialized Bodies, more frequently. We are being invited to participate in activities

that range from International Conferences to capacity-building training programs that are beneficial for our member countries.

Excellencies,

As I stated earlier, in the past 25 years of our existence, we have made tremendous achievements in the establishment of the legal framework of cooperation and the enactment of good decisions and Agreements across the priority areas of our cooperation. However, most of these Decisions and Agreements remain unimplemented most times due to shortage of resources, both manpower and financial. For this reason and for our organization to fully fulfill its potential and goals, we must quickly do a number of things. These will include strengthening the Secretariat to make it more robust than it currently is.

In conclusion, **Honourable Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,** I wish to state that we have kept faith with the vision of our founding Fathers and progressing

steadily with all programmes and activities in fulfillment of the key priority areas. Given the rapid changes in the global economic order, the D-8 is changing its dynamics and taking on new challenges in order to remain relevant and to attain the vision of its founding Fathers.

We are gearing-up to explore new areas such as technology transfer and digitalization and e-commerce to promote private sector activities and trade within and beyond D-8. I would like to quickly add that, despite the challenges, the future of our organization is bright. On this note I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the entire staff of the Secretariat, to express our gratitude for the kind support and cooperation from member countries. My staff and I look forward to further support and cooperation from the esteemed Council to enable us deliver on our mandate.

I thank you all for your patience and kind attention.

